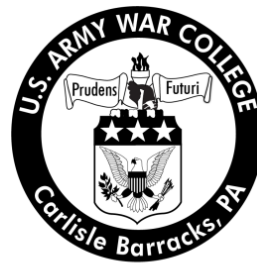


# Strategy Research Project

## The DoD Civilian Workforce: An Undervalued Resource

by

Mr. Matthew Mayes  
Department of Defense



United States Army War College  
Class of 2012

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The DoD civilian workforce is an undervalued resource. There is no formal, programmatic education continuum in place designed to develop strategic civilian leaders. Further, no framework exists for DoD civilians to provide diverse duty assignments and develop the broad experience required to serve in strategic positions within the joint, interagency, international, and multinational (JIIM) environment. Congress and DoD must act in concert to rectify this situation and thoughtfully shape the civilian workforce.

This paper recommends that DoD combine the Intelligence Community's Joint Duty Assignment program with the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce in conjunction with formal education at the Service Command and Staff, and Senior Service Colleges to provide the requisite experience and formal education needed to produce strategic civilian leaders. Fundamental to DoD's mission success is a well educated and thoughtfully shaped civilian workforce capable of performing multiple functions at the strategic level.





## THE DOD CIVILIAN WORKFORCE: AN UNDERVALUED RESOURCE

The strategic environment of the 21st century is complex and changing at an extraordinary rate. The Department of Defense (DoD) is faced with significant fiscal and operational challenges. More than ever, the mission requires doing more with less in a severely constrained fiscal environment. DoD must strategically shape, develop, and mobilize its civilian workforce to ensure the appropriate mix of civilian experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities are in place and available to accomplish its mission in a dynamic global environment.<sup>1</sup> This task requires strong, creative leadership and skillfully crafted strategies to maximize the effectiveness of its civilian workforce.

The DoD civilian workforce is an undervalued resource. There is no formal, programmatic education continuum in place designed to develop strategic civilian leaders. Further, no framework exists for DoD civilians to provide diverse duty assignments and develop the broad experience required to serve in strategic positions within the joint, interagency, international, and multinational (JIIM) environment. Congress and DoD must act in concert to rectify this situation and thoughtfully shape the civilian workforce.

This paper recommends that DoD combine the Intelligence Community's Joint Duty Assignment program with the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce in conjunction with formal education at the Service Command and Staff, and Senior Service Colleges to provide the requisite experience and formal education needed to produce strategic civilian leaders. Ultimately, DoD must make a sustained investment in its civilian workforce similar to the joint qualifications, broad experience, and formal education required of its commissioned officers. Fundamental to DoD's mission success is a well

educated and thoughtfully shaped civilian workforce capable of performing multiple functions at the strategic level.

This paper will first examine the state of DoD civilian human capital planning. Next, lessons learned from the 1990's vis-à-vis the current personnel drawdown will be reviewed. This will be followed by a discussion of the limited professional development, education and rotational assignment opportunities currently available to civilian employees. The paper will conclude with an analysis of options and a recommendation to address the Department's needs for strategic civilian leader development.

DoD is currently not well equipped to make informed decisions for strategically managing, educating, or shaping its civilian workforce. The Department lacks a comprehensive, fully developed Civilian Human Capital Strategic Plan, as well as a defined professional development and education program for its civilian workforce. Additionally, there are few mechanisms available to provide rotational assignments and diverse professional experience for civilian senior leaders. Furthermore, in the face of deep budget cuts, neither the Department nor the Services engage in any form of strategic messaging or advocacy campaign to convey to Congressional stakeholders the bedrock value and institutional continuity provided by the civilian workforce in support of military operations. Lessons learned from the 1990's appear to be either lost, or simply disregarded as Presidential, Congressional, and DoD initiatives prescribe across the board cuts and other measures to expeditiously reduce personnel costs.

#### Civilian Human Capital Planning

DoD and other federal civilians are governed by both Title 5 and Title 10 United States Code (U.S.C.). Within DoD, the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) has primary responsibility for civilian employees under sections 129 and 136 under Title 10, U.S.C.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD P&R) is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense for Total Force Management.<sup>2</sup> The USD (P&R) is a Presidential appointee<sup>3</sup> and also serves as SECDEF's senior policy advisor on recruitment, career development, pay and benefits for the 680,000<sup>4</sup> member DoD civilian workforce. One of the principal duties of the USD (P&R) is to develop and implement policies, procedures, and standards for manpower requirements determination and training for the Total Force.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the USD (P&R) has overall responsibility for developing strategies to shape the civilian workforce. Within USD (P&R), the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy (DASD (CPP)) serves as the Director of the Civilian Personnel Advisory Service and is roughly the civilian equivalent of a deputy or vice military Service Chief. However, the DASD (CPP) does not have any direct administrative or operational control over civilian employee assignments. The DASD (CPP) is specifically responsible for delivering products and services to create and sustain a diverse, high performing, and flexible civilian workforce that contributes to Total Force integration and mission readiness in support of the Warfighter.<sup>6</sup>

By law, SECDEF is required to include baselines for tracking accessions and losses of civilian positions and analysis of trends in the levels of civilian positions within DoD each year in support of the budget request to Congress.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to its military workforce, DoD is prohibited from management of civilian employees based on a maximum end strength.<sup>8</sup> The size of the civilian workforce is determined through the available budget to fund full time equivalent (FTE) positions. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reporting indicates that while DoD may know how many civilian

employees it has and when they are eligible for retirement, the Department does not have a centralized view of what skills the workforce has or will need in the future.

In 2009, GAO found DoD had not completed (1) an assessment of gaps in the existing or projected overall civilian workforce, (2) a plan of action identifying recruiting and retention goals and funding, and (3) an assessment of its progress in implementing the legislative requirement for the plan using results-oriented performance measures. However, GAO found that the Department had not assessed the critical skills for its existing and future senior leader workforce. DoD had only completed competency gap analyses for 3 of its 22 mission-critical occupations—language, logistics management, and information technology management. DoD will be hard pressed to develop effective recruitment, retention, and investment strategies until the gaps between critical skills and competencies are identified and analyzed.<sup>9</sup>

To manage an enterprise-scale workforce and make informed decisions about force structure, fundamental information, such as skill inventories and forecasts, is a basic requirement. Thus, as the federal government prepares to make deep cuts in its budget and force levels in response to Presidential and Congressional actions, it does so without a full understanding of the unintended consequences. Simply put, DoD is not well equipped to make intelligent cuts to its civilian workforce. Hence, absent data for an informed decision, across the board cuts between 10 and 15% of the workforce is the most expedient option currently available to DoD decision makers.

The civilian workforce is a vital component in the achievement of DoD's mission, and performs a wide range of activities such as policy development, intelligence collection and analysis, financial management, acquisition and maintenance of weapons systems, logistics support, etc.<sup>10</sup> Civilian personnel have deployed and served in key roles in combat zones such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and other theaters of operation. However, there are significant differences between how the civilian and military workforces are managed and developed. The civilian workforce has not been effectively

developed, managed, or employed in a consistent manner. Additionally, DoD lacks a centralized Department-wide workforce planning and requirements process for its civilian workforce.<sup>11</sup> Civilian personnel planning has traditionally been decentralized and performed at the installation or agency level.<sup>12</sup> As a result, DoD does not have a clear picture of its current inventory or future needs for specific skill sets. DoD needs a comprehensive human capital strategy to collect and validate requirements and skills inventory as well as a strategic plan for retaining, recruiting and developing civilian strategic leaders. It is only within the past decade that DoD has begun to develop a human capital plan in response to legislative requirements imposed by Congress.

DoD published its initial Civilian Human Capital Strategic Plan in 2006. However, it is incomplete and does not meet many of the requirements specified by Congress.<sup>13</sup> In 2001, GAO identified the management of the federal civilian workforce as a government wide “high-risk” area because federal agencies, especially DoD, lacked a strategic approach for workforce management that integrated those efforts into their missions and goals.<sup>14</sup> Eleven years have passed and DoD’s strategic human capital management efforts remain on GAO’s high-risk list because it has not developed or implemented plans to address current and emerging critical skill gaps.<sup>15</sup> Recent GAO studies have noted that while the DoD has some strategic plans to address shortfalls in the development of the civilian workforce, these plans have generally lacked critical funding and many elements essential to the development of successful strategic workforce planning.<sup>16</sup> For example, none of the Department’s plans have included an analysis of the gaps between critical skills and competencies needed for the civilian workforce of today or the future. The lack of such features fosters perpetuation of ineffective, poorly

designed implementation plans for recruiting, developing, and retaining top notch civilian leaders.

It is imperative that DoD develop and implement a strategy and a funding and execution plan to address current and emerging critical skill gaps to meet future mission requirements. This is critical since nearly 30% of today's DoD civilian workforce, and 90% of its senior leaders, will be eligible to retire by March 31, 2015.<sup>17</sup> DoD risks the loss of a significant portion of its invaluable skills and experience base. The Department must design and fund workforce strategies that will effectively shape the civilian workforce with the appropriate competencies needed to accomplish future DoD missions.<sup>18</sup>

#### Lessons Learned from Previous Drawdowns

DoD must learn from the past as it contemplates another large scale downsizing. Great care must be taken not to repeat the same mistakes of the past and leave a civilian workforce that is not balanced with the right skills to meet mission requirements. Subsequent to the end of the Vietnam War and the Cold War, DoD carried out large scale civilian personnel downsizing without a plan to strategically reshape its workforce<sup>19</sup> or to ensure that the Department had the specific skills and competencies needed to accomplish its mission.<sup>20</sup> The primary mechanisms used to downsize were hiring and pay freezes, attrition through retirement or resignation, and reductions in force (RIF) to meet force reduction targets. Thus, downsizing to achieve civilian reductions was primarily an issue of available funding while maintaining military troop strength, research and development, and weapons systems at desired levels. These actions adversely affected DoD civilian operations and produced skills and workload imbalances which persisted for several years.

The issues arising from DoD's rapid approach to downsizing resulted in part from the absence of a cohesive and comprehensive civilian human capital strategy to achieve civilian reductions in a balanced manner.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, DoD actively focused on the drawdown of active duty military to not only reduce force levels, but also to shape the force of the future.<sup>22</sup> No such focus was applied to the civilian workforce. Quite simply, DoD's funding concerns reflected a higher priority for maintaining military capabilities at the expense of civilian skill sets.

### Lessons Forgotten

Looming DoD budget cuts between \$500 and \$900 billion, and potentially much higher if budget sequestration occurs, will require reduction in both military and civilian personnel. However, most of the focus to date has been on the impact to defense research and development (R&D), weapons programs, and military force levels. Very little attention has been given to the potential overall impact to the 680,000 civilians in the workforce. The past year has seen a sharp increase in proposed Congressional legislation aimed squarely and exclusively at federal civilian employees to pay for the first year of DoD budget sequestration and the federal payroll tax holiday. Between January 2011 and February 2012, Congress introduced at least nineteen separate proposals designed to reduce the civilian workforce through across the board cuts,<sup>23</sup> impose mandatory periods of unpaid leave,<sup>24</sup> extend pay freezes through 2013<sup>25</sup> or 2014,<sup>26</sup> prohibit within grade (WIGI) step increases,<sup>27</sup> and significantly reduce retirement benefits.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the President's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility recommended reduction in the federal civilian workforce by 200,000 personnel.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, in 2010 the Defense Business Board (DBB) recommended that the Secretary of Defense reduce the civilian workforce by 15% and initiate an immediate

hiring freeze to reduce costs and increase efficiencies.<sup>30</sup> The federal civilian workforce is essentially being held hostage as a political pawn to bear the long-term fiscal effects of some of the most significant cuts proposed by Congress. These actions will likely produce unintended consequences such as reduced efficiency resulting from increased workloads, a demoralized federal workforce, and increased difficulty in recruiting and retaining talented and experienced civilian workers. It is abundantly clear that budget sequestration measures take direct aim at DoD civilians.

According to the DBB, there is a sizeable portion of military personnel being used to fill inherently governmental activity billets that otherwise should be occupied by DoD civilians.<sup>31</sup> DoD's military warfighters are the most expensive, whether from a recruiting, training, retention, or lifecycle standpoint.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the Department is using the most expensive personnel to perform activities that could otherwise be performed by less expensive civilian personnel.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, Congress approved changes to the military retirement system to incentivize retention of combat seasoned Generals and Admirals at the three and four star level (O-9 and O-10). Under the new rules, these officers may receive up to nearly double in retirement pension than they do on active duty.<sup>34</sup> This does not appear to be a well considered strategy at a time when the civilian workforce is being reduced and their pay frozen. Congress will surely need to revisit this issue in light of the current fiscal situation. Moreover, with the conclusion of combat operations in Iraq and efforts winding down in Afghanistan the rationale for these incentives is no longer valid. If their experience is truly needed, these Generals and Admirals should simply be recalled to active duty.



Congress continues to be very generous to the military, such as the decision to repeal the “redux” military retirement system enacted in 1986.<sup>35</sup> However, the civilian equivalent to “redux”, the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) which reduced civilian pension benefits was also enacted in 1986 and remains in place. In fact, Congress is considering further cuts to the federal budget at the expense of government civilians through implementation of a “high five” retirement system,<sup>36</sup> which would calculate retirement based on an employee’s highest five earning years vice the highest three. Further, all federal civilians have had to endure a pay and benefits freeze as a result of Congressional action while military members continue to earn base pay and Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) increases based on longevity and seniority.<sup>37</sup>

Taken altogether, these measures may be interpreted as broken faith by the civilian workforce or outright hostility and political brinksmanship. In any case, it is hard for the DoD civilian population not to feel denigrated as “human shields” by Congress as a political ploy to distract the American public’s attention from its significant dissatisfaction with the performance of their elected representatives. The civilian workforce understands the need for shared sacrifice to address the national debt and continues to serve the United States honorably and humbly.

The DoD civilian workforce was demoralized by the personnel drawdown in the 1990s and early 2000s,<sup>38</sup> resulting in many civilian employees viewing a career in public service as an untenable long term option. Results of downsizing the civilian workforce included workload backlogs, increased inefficiency, and strained cohesiveness with military counterparts. These issues also affect current employee motivation and potentially preclude new employees from joining federal service because career growth

and advancement opportunities become fewer with each budget action. A recent survey by the Partnership for Public Service indicated that only 2.3% of college students are interested in pursuing a career with the federal government upon graduation.<sup>39</sup> The implications of this study indicate a potential negative perception about working in public service. Thus, the U.S. Government will have increased difficulty recruiting and retaining employees to meet future requirements. This underscores the need for DoD to define the type of workforce it will need in the coming years, to develop plans for creating that workforce, and to follow up with the actions and investments needed so that the correct employees—with the right skills, training, tools, structures, and performance incentives—will be on hand in the years to come.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, DoD must design creative strategies to fill its talent needs through recruiting, hiring and making appropriate investments to develop and retain the best possible civilian workforce.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, it is essential that DoD develop and implement a comprehensive “Strategic Workforce Plan.”<sup>42</sup> Improved planning for future reductions will mitigate potential adverse effects organizationally and individually, and better shape the civilian force to meet future force requirements.<sup>43</sup>

Previous fiscally driven personnel drawdowns gutted the civilian workforce and its continuity base. During the downsizing of the 1990s, the additional workload created by departing employees increased stress levels, work hours, and depressed morale, since DoD lacked clear civilian mission objectives. Civilian downsizing occurred without benefit of a plan to target when and where reductions should occur.<sup>44</sup> The military services noted that while they had strategic guidelines for downsizing military resources, they did not have similar guidance for strategically downsizing civilian functions.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, across the board reductions did not always correspond to decreased workload requirements.<sup>46</sup> Increased workloads and extended work schedules invariably had an adverse affect on civilian employees and sometimes proved altogether more costly due to overtime and other compensatory requirements. Other adverse impacts from the 1990's personnel drawdown included increased maintenance and repair time for equipment and weapons systems, reduced recreational and military family services, and reduced civilian workers' morale attributed to longer working hours, limited career and promotion opportunities and job insecurity. Overall, military officials expressed concern that future civilian reductions could unfavorably affect military readiness.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, the Department resorted to hiring contractors to fill the void left by downsizing civilian personnel. Today, the number of contractors in DoD stands at approximately 766,000 at a cost of about \$155 billion,<sup>48</sup> and exceeds the 680,000 member DoD civilian workforce. Consequently, the current civilian personnel drawdown may have inadvertently created an enduring perception that its civilian employees are considered disposable labor and second class citizens.

#### Joint Duty, Education, and Qualification

The Department of Defense has long emphasized joint operations between the military services; emphasis on interagency and multinational collaboration is somewhat newer.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, relationships are of primary importance in national level joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environments.<sup>50</sup> Yet, senior military leaders may have little, if any, direct exposure to, or understanding of, Government employee culture at the national and interagency level. The interpersonal, political, and strategic dynamics are very different than a single service-specific command or unit. Senior officers frequently arrive in the interagency environment

having recently completed a unit-level command tour within their parent service. Thus, the interpersonal skills and leadership styles that officers have acquired throughout their careers do not necessarily translate well in national level and JIIM environments.

“Jointness” is typically interpreted as integrated or collaborative operations between the military services. Similarly, “interagency” is frequently used to describe activities between DoD and external agencies such as the Department of State. However, neither of these terms captures or represents the necessary interactions with non-politically appointed, career senior civilian employees within the Department, particularly those within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD).

In making the transition from the operational level to the strategic DoD institutional arena, many officers encounter civilians as coworkers and colleagues for the first time. This transition can be difficult for military leaders who have been indoctrinated, assimilated, and immersed in a stratified Service culture environment with limited exposure to civilian personnel. Decision making habits formed at the tactical and operational levels must evolve to the broader view with an emphasis on collaboration, mutual respect, influence, and negotiation as primary tools for a senior staff officer. Senior military officers and civilian executives alike must adjust their leadership styles, placing greater emphasis on influence, negotiation, strategic vision, and communication to effectively accomplish the mission. According to one U.S. Army General Officer:

I did not have an appreciation of the DoD civilians who worked on the posts where I was stationed. I did not appreciate them because I did not understand the critical role they play or their unyielding dedication to the mission. Civilians bring technical skills, stability, and a strategic view to the mission because of longevity in an organization and a markedly different career rotation.<sup>51</sup>

The DoD civilian subculture is one of the most difficult topics for military personnel to understand. The significant role that civilians play in DoD is not well understood by many uniformed service members.<sup>52</sup> It is unfortunate that some senior military leaders believe that DoD civilians are nothing more than career bureaucrats, with all the associated negative connotations.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, some senior military officers believe that the determination of relative funding priorities within DoD should be limited exclusively to uniformed military officers.<sup>54</sup> Worse, some military personnel believe that placing career civilians in charge of defense agencies represents a structural defect in Pentagon administration, and therefore, the tail is wagging the dog.<sup>55</sup> These attitudes serve no useful purpose and ultimately diminish DoD's ability to operate effectively.

Uniformed military service members engage in combat operations led by a cadre of outstanding commissioned officers. However, the military services cannot effectively defend the nation without the experience, dedication, and skills of DoD civilians. Cultural differences between civilian and military leadership are narrowing, but momentum must be sustained to create positive and enduring improvements. Moreover, DoD must make greater investment into professional development programs for civilians to better integrate and support military operations.

#### Civilian Professional Development and Assignment Opportunities

DoD is increasingly dependent upon the civilian workforce to assume greater levels of responsibility and to perform additional roles and functions that have traditionally been performed by the military. The civilian workforce has gained significant experience supporting combat operations over the past ten years. This experience must be enhanced with continued professional education and broader opportunities to develop agile and adaptive civilian strategic leaders who are able to operate effectively

in joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational (JIIM) environments. The significant role that civilians play in DoD and on a grander scale - their interaction with other national security agencies – is not well appreciated.<sup>56</sup> Just as military officers are required to have joint duty experience and education to advance to higher grades and positions, so too do DoD civilians require the same diversity of assignment as an integrated member of a JIIM staff. To do so enhances professional experience and, more importantly, expands perspective and understanding of requirements and limitations from the front lines.

The Department has done an excellent job shaping the career growth of military officers and their continued formal development through joint professional military education (JPME) requirements to become Joint Qualified. Regrettably, DoD has not made a similar investment in civilian career educational needs to develop the next generation of mid and senior level strategic leaders. Unlike their uniformed counterparts, DoD civilians do not have a professional national security education continuum such as the Joint Duty qualification. There has been no deliberate strategy to grow or shape the civilian workforce for strategic leadership roles. As a result, a significant disparity exists between a large portion of the civilian workforce and its military counterparts. The Department needs a parallel effort to synchronize civilian and military professional development with the goals of ensuring, where appropriate, common professional training and education between Senior Executive Service (SES) and flag officers and increasing joint capability. DoD expects civilian executive requirements to increase by more than 400 positions, and senior executive leaders by 240 for fiscal year 2015.<sup>57</sup>

Typically a career civilian employee is not afforded a significant in-residence strategic development opportunity until reaching the executive (GS-15) and SES grades. There are no dedicated feeder programs tailored to civilian executive career tracks and development needs at the basic or intermediate levels, although some employees may attend one of the Service Command and Staff Colleges. Additionally, only a relatively small number of civilians are selected annually to attend one of the Senior Service Colleges (SSC) in-residence. During the period from 2005 to 2012, DoD civilian students represented an average of 6% of the annual total resident student population at the U.S. Army War College.<sup>58</sup> This represents a very small proportion of the student body and is insufficient to produce the number of strategic civilian leaders needed for the future. Those civilians who have attended a SSC have a distinct advantage over their peers and are far more equipped to serve in strategic roles throughout DoD. However, DoD civilians have no formal requirements for joint military education at any level, and no real incentive to do so.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, civilians are largely on their own to discover and pursue career development opportunities. There is no cumulative, programmatic, or systematic approach for training and educating civilian senior leaders similar to the military's JPME system. Each of the military services has its own civilian ad-hoc workforce development programs. However, these are generally modeled after the Office of Personnel Management's programs, which are essentially training in basic leadership competencies rather than a strategic education for JIIM environments.

There is a growing consensus among many practitioners and scholars across the political spectrum that favors reforming the U.S. government interagency system to

encourage a more effective application of all elements of national power.<sup>60</sup> Events during the past ten years, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and natural disasters at home, such as Hurricane Katrina, have underscored the need for improvement in the U.S. Government's collective ability to integrate the various components of its efforts.<sup>61</sup> Every response to national security threats and opportunities shares the need for integrated interagency engagement.<sup>62</sup>

Early operational experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan led many observers to conclude that U.S. government interagency coordination in the decision-making, strategy-making, and planning and execution for national security activities left much to be desired.<sup>63</sup> For example, in the case of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), some practitioners and observers suggested that an insufficiently rigorous National Security Council decision-making process failed to appropriately define objectives or to assign roles and missions among agencies ahead of time; that agencies conducted insufficient planning for post-war considerations; and that in the execution of the formal occupation of Iraq, agencies found it difficult to collaborate smoothly and seamlessly.<sup>64</sup>

A scan of the environment reveals at least two existing programs with the potential to fulfill some of the professional development requirements to address these observations. Among these are the Intelligence Community's (IC) Joint Duty Assignment Program (JDAP) and the National Security Professional Development (NSPD) program. Each of these programs has individual elements that can be combined to produce a suitable template for developing future civilian strategic leaders.

The Intelligence Community Joint Duty Assignment Program consists of two components. The first part of the program is designed to expose employees to rotational



positions that provide substantive professional, technical, or leadership experience away from the incumbent's home agency, department or organization.<sup>65</sup> The second part of the program, the Joint Leadership Development Program (JLDP), consists of formal educational requirements which are designed to develop future strategic leaders with community perspectives and strategic outlooks.<sup>66</sup> Completion of both components results in JDA Program certification and is now a prerequisite for promotion to the Senior Executive Service or its equivalents within the IC.

The DoD implementation instruction for the JDA program was signed in mid-2008. It is nearly four years later and the JLDP portion remains non-existent. While the JDA Program has proven to be fairly effective in fostering rotational assignments within the IC, it still lacks the formal educational component vitally necessary for professional development. Once this part of the program is developed and implemented, employees will be required to complete the training and education courses, in addition to completing the joint duty assignment, prior to receiving joint certification. Broad joint experience and formal, advanced education are fundamental requirements to produce fully “joint qualified” senior civilian leaders.

The implementing instruction implies that a defined professional career path exists for IC employees; however, this is not the case. While, DoD and the IC have done some valuable work toward establishing a formal career development path for its civilians, much remains to be completed in order to ensure the program is complete and effective. The JDA program is restricted to members of the IC, but it provides an excellent example of how rotational assignments might work within the NSPD program.

In 2007, the Bush Administration initiated the NSPD program through Executive Order (E.O.) 13434 and the accompanying National Strategy for NSPD. This program is based on the three pillars of education, training, and rotational service away from one's "home agency."<sup>67</sup> The basic intent of this program is to prepare civilian and military leaders across government to plan national security missions with interagency counterparts and execute those missions at home and abroad, and to eventually become capable of overseeing their own agencies' efforts in senior leadership positions.<sup>68</sup> Thus, participants would gain a far greater understanding of the mandates, capabilities, and cultures of other agencies. However, E.O. 13434 lacked a definition of what constitutes a "national security professional" (NSP), a mechanism for identifying "future" NSP candidates, and a system for tracking and effectively employing or assigning NSPs once they had completed program requirements.<sup>69</sup>

In September 2010, Congress introduced legislation for a program similar to the NSPD entitled the "Interagency National Security Professional Education, Administration, and Development System" (INSPEADS) Act of 2010.<sup>70</sup> It drew explicitly on the *Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986* and the military's joint qualification system to create a multi-faceted "interagency qualification" based on education, training, and interagency exchange service.<sup>71</sup> Under the INSPEADS Act, designated "interagency national security professional" positions would be mapped to specified levels of qualification, helping to ensure that critical national security posts were filled by individuals with adequate "interagency" experience. Achieving the highest level of interagency qualification would be a prerequisite for filling a SES-level NSPD billet.<sup>72</sup> The proposal broadly defined a "national security professional" as a federal employee

with responsibility or significant participation in planning, coordination, or execution of activities relating to national security matters within the executive branch of the Government.<sup>73</sup> The proposal included funding and a means of initial identification of interagency national security positions; yet it lacked any means to track NSP candidates' progress to complete program requirements or identify future candidates. Moreover, neither E.O. 13434 nor the INSPEADS Act defined the educational requirements needed to achieve "National Security Professional" qualification. Regrettably, this bill was not enacted into law. Such a program would have provided a solid foundation to build upon using the rotational assignment experience from the Intelligence Community's JDA program.

The *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 (NDAA FY11)* required the Department of Defense to select an "appropriate independent, nonprofit organization" with "relevant expertise in the fields of national security and human capital development, to conduct a study to assess the current state of interagency national security knowledge and skills in DoD civilian and military personnel," and make recommendations for strengthening knowledge and skills.<sup>74</sup> The *NDAA* required the Secretary of Defense to submit its findings to congressional defense committees by December 1, 2011. The *NDAA* also required that the study consider the availability of training, education, rotational assignment opportunities; as well as incentives and disincentives for individuals to undertake these opportunities; the integration of such educational opportunities with DoD's JPME system; and the existing level of interagency knowledge and skills of senior civilian and military officials.<sup>75</sup> The largest remaining obstacle to making NSPD a viable initiative, aside from funding, appears to

be agreement on the academic curriculum. There is general agreement on a core of material that should develop shared capabilities among all NSPs such as strategic, creative and critical thinking; executive leadership of interagency teams; planning and managing interagency operations; maintaining global and cultural acuity; mediating and negotiating; and strategic communication.<sup>76</sup>

Creation of a clear career path in conjunction with a professional development program would ideally serve as an incentive for DoD civilian national security professionals to seek out interagency experience and education and as a catalyst to build greater JIIM capacity.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the NSPD program could be also be linked to the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce program that would provide invaluable and unique operational JIIM experiences from the front lines. The NSPD program is currently the only proposed initiative which aims to emphasize JIIM education and collaboration across the whole of the federal government. In its current form, however, NSPD is focused on a pilot program organized around emergency management with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) designated as lead agency.<sup>78</sup>

Quite simply, DoD needs to invest more in the professional development of its civilian workforce and it is close to having the means for doing so, notwithstanding the availability of funding. DoD requires a civilian program that is similar to the military's JPME system. This would foster a stable and diverse community of civilian professionals with the proper balance of relevant skills, attributes, experiences, and broad knowledge. A continuum of civilian employee career development, education, and training is essential in developing the desired pool of civilian talent and preparing DoD for the future. DoD civilians need greater integration and direct exposure to military

operations. Only recently has the Department begun to mobilize the civilian workforce as part of the Total Force.

In recent years, many military personnel have been mobilized for multiple deployments in support of OIF and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). As a result of ten years of war and the current climate of austerity, DoD realized the operational need and the opportunity to better integrate civilians into the Total Force. DoD has undertaken efforts to employ its civilian workforce to perform combat support functions that are traditionally performed by military personnel. Thus, the availability of military personnel is enhanced to focus on warfighting duties for which they are uniquely qualified.<sup>79</sup>

The Civilian Expeditionary Workforce (CEW) was established in 2007 to ensure sufficient qualified civilian employees are available for global deployment. Their mission is to support combat operations, as well as humanitarian assistance and disaster recovery efforts. The CEW has been helpful in relieving the strain on military personnel by filling those positions that had been previously occupied by uniformed service members.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, CEW created a pool of DoD civilian employees capable of deploying overseas to provide direct support to military operations, resulting in a force multiplier. Additionally, the CEW provides an exceptional opportunity for DoD civilians to learn about national security strategy via direct, first-hand operational experience. The CEW is designed to support a variety of missions vital to national security, including humanitarian aid, contingency operations, combat operations, intelligence analysis, contracting, engineering, law enforcement, and logistics management. Civilian

employees are uniquely equipped to perform these functions where a warfighter is not explicitly required.

In almost a decade of sustained combat, more than 30,000 DoD civilians have been deployed into harm's way to support U.S. military operations during the most dangerous and difficult periods of conflict.<sup>81</sup> In fact, over 4,300 Civilians deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan in 2010 alone.<sup>82</sup> Thus, DoD civilian employees play an integral role in supporting U.S. military forces around the world. The CEW provides an agile, critical component in support of military operations. In establishing the CEW, former DUSD(P&R) David S.C. Chu stated:

Alongside our military men and women, DoD civilians have been called upon to support combat operations; expand Security, Stability, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) operations, including on Provincial Reconstruction Teams; and assist with humanitarian, emergency, and other contingency operations around the globe. However, the dynamic and asymmetric 21st century mission challenges require even greater expeditionary capability within the civilian workforce to help reduce stress on our military personnel—a top Department priority. These challenges call for a civilian capability that is ready, trained, and prepared to participate in and support military operations swiftly and competently. In November 2007, the Department launched an effort to do just that, to build greater expeditionary capability that addresses mission, deployment, and readiness requirements and develops appropriate human resource policies to complement these requirements. It is critical that the Department have the right incentives and benefits to support an expanded civilian expeditionary capability to provide for the interoperability of Federal employees to support the DoD missions.<sup>83</sup>

The success of the CEW program has resulted in more requests for DoD civilians to be deployed. As active U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down, the need for CEW deployers is likely to remain strong. CEW will remain a vital part of U.S. military missions and will be an important part of meeting needs in future contingency operations.<sup>84</sup> According to Marilee Fitzgerald, former Acting Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy (DUSD CPP),

One change that could help draw attention to the civilian talent pool at CEW is the fact that the civilians increasingly are considered in the policymaking decision process. It is both in theater at the Combatant Command level and at the expeditionary level that they begin to talk about which positions could be civilian and which ones need to be military. This notion of the Combatant Commands having the capability to consider the civilian talent is a major paradigm shift.<sup>85</sup>

### Options and Recommendation

Interagency rotational assignments and formal national security education resulting in the civilian equivalent of the military's Joint Qualified Officer should become mandatory for elevation to SES, and potentially for advancement in grade between GS-12 to GS-15. The greatest challenge lies in how to accomplish this task. Fortunately, there are several existing options that can be used as a potential starting point. Options include expansion of novel approaches employed by U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), or through combining elements of the Service Command and Staff Colleges, SSCs, IC JDA program, and CEW.

Among U.S. geographic commands, USAFRICOM is unique in having two co-equal deputies -- a civilian deputy and a military deputy.<sup>86</sup> To foster greater integration between senior civilian and military leaders, the practice of assigning an SES civilian as deputy commander of a geographical or functional combatant command should be expanded. The civilian's duties and responsibilities should be specifically tied to developing interagency partnerships, strategy, and providing alternative options and perspective to the commander. Similar rotational assignments should be established within the combatant commands for civilians at the GS-14/GS-15 level to provide much needed experience developing policy, plans, and strategy recommendations for senior leaders.

This approach provides civilians with opportunities to integrate with their military counterparts, interagency partners, develop professional relationships, and cohesion that will likely prove useful in future assignments. However, civilians should not be limited to roles such as serving as a deputy to a military officer of equivalent grade. Experience gained from leading and directing at the executive level in a large JIIM organization is invaluable in building strategic civilian leaders. A series of short term details or assignments between six and 24 months aimed at GS-13 through GS-15 would provide the broad and diverse experience necessary to develop strategic vision.

There are three primary disadvantages to this approach. The first issue is the lack of the formal education component to complement broadened experience. The second issue is that some organizations may not be willing to allow multiple candidates the necessary time away from their core missions at a time when workloads are increasing faster than resource and budget availability. The third disadvantage of this option is the difference between the relatively low number of potentially available positions and the high number of deserving candidates.

The recommended option is to combine and broaden the existing rotational assignment opportunities within the IC's JDA and CEW programs under the guidance and direction of the USD (P&R). Both of these are institutional DoD programs with a proven record of success. Formal education requirements should begin at the GS-12/GS-13 level through competitive selection and resident attendance at one of the Service Command and Staff Colleges, with 10% of available seats at each institution reserved for civilian candidates.



Upon graduation, civilians would receive an initial follow-on assignment in the JIIM environment prior to returning to one's parent agency. This should become a requirement for advancement to GS-14/GS-15, and culminate with competitive selection to one of the SSCs. Assignment following graduation would once again be to a JIIM position. Successful completion of this assignment would form part of a candidate's eligibility and consideration for elevation to SES. In conjunction with this option, DoD should centralize civilian workforce management and career development so that DoD can make informed decisions with regard to basic skills inventories, forecasting, and workforce shaping.

As it has with the military services, DoD must now make clear to elected officials that the Department is heavily reliant on its civilian workforce and actions such as those previously outlined serve only to further undermine military readiness. DoD should execute a strategic messaging campaign designed to raise the awareness of Congressional members and to the American public of the significant contributions made by the civilian workforce in defending and protecting this nation. DoD must also make clear to its civilian employees that they are valued members of the national security team. Implementation of a civilian equivalent of the military's JPME program and strategic messaging campaign will send a clear message to the Department and the nation, and will launch DoD ahead of the rest of the Federal government. The Department must make the same concerted effort and investment to develop its civilian workforce as it has with military career planning.

## Conclusion

Clearly, the development of the DoD civilian workforce warrants sustained focus and further investment. DoD must take ownership and definitive steps beyond Congressionally mandated requirements to develop a comprehensive civilian human capital strategy plan, allocate adequate funding, and define professional development career roadmap for its civilian employees. A combination of joint duty rotational assignments and expeditionary experience must also become a part of the development program to effectively train and prepare the next generation of civilian strategic leaders. For far too long, DoD has essentially regarded its civilian workforce as an afterthought. “Joint service” must be redefined to include the civilian workforce rather than regarding it as a strictly supporting element, especially as it relates to the formulation of national security strategy and policy. The strategic role of civilian employees must be clearly articulated in doctrine, policy, and strategy such that it is fully and clearly understood at all echelons of the DoD hierarchy.

In the current climate of fiscal austerity, DoD must maintain a balanced focus on reshaping both the military and civilian workforces that ensures the right people with the right skills are in the right places and the right time to perform DoD missions. DoD can no longer turn a blind eye and ignore the absolutely clear need to develop, integrate, leverage and shape the civilian and military workforces in a holistic manner. The risk of talented workers leaving civil service for private industry in significant numbers as a result of across the board cuts, Congressional actions, or disenchantment due to additional burdens imposed by the fiscal drawdown is very real. DoD must not forget the lessons learned from previous drawdowns.

It is time for Congress and DoD to formally recognize the role, sacrifices and contributions civilian employees make to national security. DoD leadership must demonstrate the same degree of loyalty to its civilian workforce as it has to its military service members and families, especially with regard to proposed legislation. The Department can no longer rely solely on military assets for mission accomplishment. DoD must truly integrate civilians into the Total Force rather than simply counting their “total numbers.” Civilian employees are a dedicated and mission-focused force multiplier. They do not seek wealth, power or fame. DoD civilians join government service to make a meaningful contribution to national security. The Department must not break faith with its civilian workforce; DoD cannot effectively defend the nation without the contributions, experience, dedication, and skills of its civilian employees.

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